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ABSTRACT

This document details regulations that govern the administration of kindergarten programs in Mississippi public school districts. The guidelines are prefaced by a list of members of the K-3 Reading Work Group, who reviewed the regulations; a list of six learning principles; and the state's kindergarten philosophy with nine accompanying goals. The first section lists the state's Kindergarten guidelines in ten areas: (1) curriculum; (2) organizational procedures; (3) physical settings for existing structures; (4) physical settings for new structures; (5) outside play area; (6) staff; (7) entrance age; (8) educational materials; (9) parent participation; and (10) assessment. Optional guidelines are then listed for physical setting for existing and new structures, outside play area, staff, educational materials, parent participation, and transportation. The final segment of the document details reading benchmarks in ten categories: (1) attends and responds to print; (2) has sense of story; (3) exhibits developmentally appropriate oral language for communication purposes; (4) recognizes uppercase and lowercase letters; (5) uses knowledge of letter-sound relationships to manipulate sounds in the written word; (6) demonstrates phonemic awareness; (7) constructs meaning when responding to print; (8) creates a written form using various materials; (9) develops listening skills; and (10) develops and expands sight vocabulary. (KK)

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February 1998

Mississippi State Department of Education

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MISSISSIPPI

KINDERGARTEN

GUIDELINES

Mississippi Department of Education
Richard A. Boyd, Interim State Superintendent
Fourth Edition, February 1998

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Preface

This document contains regulations which govern the administration of kindergarten programs in Mississippi public school districts. These regulations originally adopted by the Mississippi State Board of Education in 1984 in response to the requirements of Section 37-21-7, (c) Mississippi Code have been amended twice, once in 1989 and again in 1991.

In 1988, the Mississippi Legislators placed kindergarten under the minimum education program in Section 8 of Mississippi Code. The State Board of Education adopted revisions to the regulations which reflected the change in the Code.

These regulations, prepared by members of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee and approved by the State Board of Education, are based on the original criteria and on research findings by leading early childhood educators and national organizations.

In October 1991, the regulations were amended by the State Board of Education to clarify the distinction between the requirements school districts must adhere to and the suggested practices. Thus, the Kindergarten Guidelines are the requirements to which all school districts must adhere. The Optional Kindergarten Guidelines contains suggestions that school districts are encouraged to adopt, but are not required.

In February 1998, the regulations were again amended as a response to the current research on reading and early childhood education. The regulations were reviewed and revised by members of the K-3 Reading Work Group and approved by the State Board of Education.

K-3 READING WORK GROUP

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LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Effective educational planning for young children takes into account knowledge of human growth and development. The learning principles that guide this planning include the following:

1. Children learn as total persons (emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually).

2. Children go through similar stages of development, but at individual rates.

3. Children learn through their senses (hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling).

4. Children learn through active involvement (exploring, playing, manipulating, problem-solving).

5. Children learn through attitudes as well as through content; therefore, attention should be given to methods, emotional climate, environment, and teacher-child interaction.

6. Children learn through play; therefore, sensitivity to the value of play is required, for it is through play that children create their own meaning and learning schemes. Play is the work of the child.

KINDERGARTEN PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The Kindergarten program shall reflect an understanding of child development principles. These principles shall be embodied in the curriculum design and general learning environment. The instructional

delivery is to be organized around learning centers where opportunities are provided for children to acquire skills and concepts involving problem-solving, decision-making, questioning, evaluating, and discovering.

The realistic goals for kindergarten education are as follows:

1. To help the child develop a positive self concept.

2. To help the child achieve intellectual growth.

3. To help the child enlarge his/her world of people, experiences, ideas, and things.

4. To help the child increase competence and skills in reading, writing, listening, thinking, and speaking.

5. To help the child increase the skills involved in physical coordination.

6. To help the child increase competence in dealing with emotional feelings and social situations.

7. To help the child increase competence in self-direction and independence.

8. To help the child develop cooperative trusting relationships.

9. To help the child develop his/her natural curiosity and his/her creative potential.

MISSISSIPPI KINDERGARTEN GUIDELINES

1.0 Curriculum

1.1 The instructional day shall include large and small group activities, learning center activities, and individual instructional activities.

1.2 Subjects for kindergarten shall be integrated through a unit\thematic format.

1.3 The curriculum shall include integrated language arts (reading, listening, thinking, speaking, writing, and viewing)*, music, art, math, social studies, science, dramatic play, and physical activities.

*See suggested Reading Benchmarks for Kindergarten (pages 11-12).

1.4 Learning centers with concrete materials are to be used on a daily basis. A minimum of three centers containing concrete manipulative materials shall be in simultaneous use during each designated center time. The following are examples:

1. Reading center
2. Creative arts center
3. Science center
4. Math center
5. Language arts center
6. Cooking center
7. Blocks, wheel toys, and construction center

8. Sand and/or water center
9. Woodworking center
10. Music center
11. Library center
12. Listening center
13. Dramatic play
14. Creative writing center
15. Social Studies center
16. Technology center

If space is very limited some of these centers may be combined.

1.5 Every child is to be engaged in learning center activities for a minimum of 100 minutes per day. Sixty minutes of the 100 required minutes must be spent in uninterrupted center time. (Using learning centers 1.4, for example, the time could be spent in a teacher directed reading center, an assistant teacher facilitated language arts center and one or more centers for child centered explorations. Theses centers rotate every 20 minutes; therefore the child will received 60 minutes of uninterrupted instruction utilizing centers.) An additional 150 minutes will be spent in other instructional activities such as large group instruction, library, music, physical education, art, and computer instruction.

1.6 Teachers are to use, at a minimum, the resources developed by the Mississippi Department of Education in curriculum planning such as the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks. Other additional resources may be added as desired by each school district.

2.0 Organizational Procedures

2.1 The teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:22 maximum. If an assistant teacher is assigned to the kindergarten classroom, the teacher-pupil ratio shall not exceed 1:27.

2.2 The length of the school day shall be the same as that of the other grades of the elementary school.

2.3 The length of the school term shall be the same as that of the other grades of the elementary school.

2.4 Students will participate in physical activity for a minimum of 40 minutes during the school day. The 40 minutes does not have to take place continuously.

2.5 Students will engage in a minimum of 30-minutes of quiet time daily. Activities during quiet time may include individual activities, sustained silent reading, listening to books on tape, drawing, or resting, as appropriate for each individual student.

3.0 Physical Settings for Existing Structures

3.1 The classroom will consist of a minimum of 600 square feet.

3.2 The classroom will be located no more than 125 feet from a bathroom.

3.3 Furniture will be of an appropriate height for young children. Tables and chairs are required rather than desks.

3.4 Kindergarten classrooms are to be located at ground level.

3.5 Every closet latch shall be such that children can open the door from the inside.

3.6 Every toilet room door lock shall be designed to permit opening of the locked door from the outside in an emergency, and the opening device shall be readily accessible to the staff.

3.7 The maximum distance to an exit from any point in the building shall not exceed 150 feet. The maximum distance from the classroom door at the corridor to an exit shall not exceed 100 feet.

4.0 Physical Settings for New Structures

4.1 All building construction shall conform to the Southern Building Codes, the American Disabilities Act, the Life Safety Codes, the Guide for School Facility Standards and Procedures, published by the Mississippi Department of Education, and to any other local building codes.

4.2 The classroom shall be a minimum of 1,000 square feet.

4.3 The minimum classroom width shall be 24 feet except in pod-type structures.

4.4 Each classroom shall contain a minimum of one bathroom that shall consist of a toilet and lavatory, or at the district's option the lavatory may be omitted if the work counter area is equipped with a sink and is in close proximity to the toilet room door. The toilet paper holder is required and is to be placed within a child's reach from the toilet. Individual toilet rooms are required to accommodate the physically handicapped and be in compliance with ADA regulations.

4.5 Open storage units, known as cubbies, shall be provided for each student.

4.6 Built-in cabinets or portable storage areas shall be constructed to promote accessibility of materials to the child in order to encourage the selection of activities and to facilitate room clean-up.

4.7 Wall receptacles shall be placed 10 feet to 15 feet apart in each classroom. Any receptacle in the counter area should not be located near a sink. A minimum of six outlets is required.

4.8 Classroom lighting shall contain operable standard fluorescent lights with area controls that provide adequate lighting. Switches within reach of the children, will be located at the doors. Toilet rooms will contain lighting fixtures.

4.9 Furniture shall be an appropriate height for the children.

4.10 Kindergarten classrooms are to be located at ground level.

4.11 The maximum distance to an exit from any point in the building shall not exceed 150 feet. The maximum distance from the interior classroom door at the corridor to an exit shall not exceed 100 feet.

4.12 Every closet latch shall be such that children can open the door from the inside.

4.13 Every toilet room door lock shall be designed to permit opening of the locked door from the outside in an emergency, and the opening device shall be readily accessible to the staff..

5.0 Outside Play Area

5.1 A designated area for supervised outside periods during the kindergarten day shall be provided.

5.2 Kindergarten students shall not simultaneously share an area with children in grades three or above during designated outside periods.

5.3 The outside play area shall have defined boundaries to protect children from environmental hazards such as traffic and/or stray animals.

5.4 Appropriate playground equipment and landscape design should be provided to facilitate learning and ensure safety.

6.0 Staff

6.1 Each school district shall designate an Early Childhood Coordinator with N-1, K-3 or K-8 licensure and expertise in working with young children. The principal or a kindergarten teacher may serve as Coordinator.

6.2 Administrators/coordinators of early childhood programs must attend any School Executive Management Institute (SEMI) modules that addresses K-3 programs which includes developmentally appropriate practices. This program is sponsored by the School Management Institute.

6.3 School systems must provide annual training related to principles and methods of early childhood education and reading instruction for new and veteran kindergarten teachers, assistant teachers and program administrators.

6.4 All persons responsible for supervising the kindergarten program must attend workshops and/or seminars sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Education regarding kindergarten implementation and supervision.

7.0 Entrance Age

7.1 A kindergarten pupil shall have reached the age of five years on or before September 1.

7.2 A birth certificate, social security number, and immunization record are required for all kindergarten students and shall be presented to the proper school authority.

8.0 Educational Materials

8.1 The initial expenditure for any new classroom for equipment, instructional materials and consumable supplies shall be a minimum of $2,000 per classroom.

8.2 The district is to spend a minimum of $200 per classroom per year on instructional materials consumable supplies. This money is in addition to the Educational Enhancement Fund monies allocated to each teacher.

8.3 Educational materials shall reflect the instructional needs and implementation of learning activities described for kindergarten.

9.0 Parent Participation

9.1 Each school district shall develop and distribute a parent handbook.

9.2 Teacher/parent conferences shall be conducted twice during the kindergarten year to inform parents or guardians of student progress. If documented attempts to meet with parents or other responsible persons fail, telephone conferences can be substituted.

10.0 Assessment

10.1 Pencil-paper group standardized tests, are not appropriate evaluation measures for kindergarten children, and will not be used.

10.2 Assessment of kindergarten skills should be documented through use of a variety of techniques and procedures to include: checklists, performance scales, portfolios of children's work, anecdotal records, observational reports, video and audio tape recordings, experience charts, photographs, and informal tests.

10.3 Continuous evaluation through use of a variety of techniques, procedures, and tools will be used to determine individual needs.

OPTIONAL KINDERGARTEN GUIDELINES

Physical Setting for Existing Structures

- A toilet room in the classroom is recommended for kindergarten children.
- It is recommended that toilet seats in bathrooms be from 10 to 13 inches from the floor.
- It is recommended that lavatories be 24 inches from the floor.
- Where multiple kindergarten units occur within a school, it is recommended that they be grouped adjacent to one another for teacher and child interaction and for optimum use of common facilities.
- Each classroom should have a 9 by 12 foot area rug or individual carpet squares to be used for large group meetings.
- Classroom areas, not carpeted, should be covered with resilient flooring or other easily cleaned material. Roll-type resilient flooring has the advantage of a minimum amount of jointing.
- It is recommended that each kindergarten classroom have a work counter of at least 12 feet with at least one sink. The sink should be stainless steel or porcelain, standard with gooseneck fitting on one side and a drinking bubble on the other. It is recommended that the sink have cold water only. A paper towel dispenser accessible to students and a trash receptacle should be located near the sink.
- Base cabinets are recommended below all counters. Doors should be attached to some cabinets and some should be left open to serve as shelves. Open cabinet 18" x 24" and 24" x 36" will accommodate the large paper used for easel painting.
- Cabinets, 12" deep, are recommended over the entire counter area for general storage.
- Open storage units known as cubbies are recommended for every two students. Each needs to be four feet high and two feet wide with coat hanging space at the bottom and a storage area at the top. Coat hooks should be installed 36 inches from the floor.
- Adequate storage space should be provided. The storage units may include one wall of built-in cabinets or moveable storage sections. Most storage units should be accessible to children to facilitate independence and responsibility within the classroom. Storage space, above the reach of the children, is recommended for use by teachers.

- At least two small bookcases or book display shelves are desirable.
- Adequate space for display of children's work should be provided. Bulletin boards can be located on walls and/or fastened to the backs of cabinets and bookcases.
- It is recommended that 110 volt wall plugs be located every 10 feet to15 feet around the classroom. Safety covers should be provided for wall sockets not in use.
- Chairs in the kindergarten classroom should vary from 8 to 14 inches so that all children's feet will touch the floor.
- Tables should be from 20 to 24 inches in height.
- A desk, chair, file cabinet and/or personal area should be provided within the classroom for teachers.
- If space within the school is available, it is recommended that a Teacher's Work Area of 180 to 200 square feet be allocated for use by every two to three kindergarten teachers. This area is needed for individual assessment of children, conferencing with parents, making classroom materials, and planning meetings.

Physical Settings for New Structures

- All kindergarten units within one school, should be grouped in the same general vicinity for optimum use of common facilities.
- A 9 x 12 foot area rug or individual carpet squares of low pile, high density fiber should be used to carpet a portion of each classroom. The entire floor should be covered with resilient flooring or should have an easily cleanable finish. Roll-type resilient flooring has the advantage of a minimum amount of jointing.
- A classroom clock is recommended.
- It is recommended that base cabinets be placed below all counters. Doors should be attached to some cabinets and some should be left open to serve as shelves. Open cabinet 18" x 24" and 24" x 36" will accommodate the large paper used for easel painting.
- It is recommended that 12-inch deep upper wall cabinets be located at adult height over the counter area.
- It is recommended that an upright 3 x 5 foot cabinet be provided for every two kindergarten classrooms. Utility cabinets will be used for storage of brooms, mops, and other large items.
- Cubbies should be four feet high and two feet wide with coat hanging space at the top and below. Coat hooks should be placed 36 inches from the floor. Generally these are built in sections of five or ten.
- At least two small bookcases or book display units should be provided.
- Adequate space for display of children's work should be provided. Bulletin boards can be located on the walls and/or fastened to the backs of movable cabinets and bookcases.
- A body length, shatter-proof wall or floor mirror should be located in the housekeeping center area

or in close proximity to the toilet area.

- It is recommended that 110 volt wall plugs be located every 10 to 15 feet around the classroom. Safety covers should be provided for wall sockets.
- Chairs in the kindergarten classroom should vary from 8 to 14 inches so that all children's feet touch the floor.
- A desk, chair, file cabinet and/or personal area should be provided within the classroom for teachers.
- A Teacher's Work Area of 180 to 200 square feet minimum should be allocated for use by every two to three kindergarten teachers. A proportionately larger space shared by all kindergarten teachers in a school would suffice. This room should be made inviting through use of carpeting and appropriate furniture. Also included should be a four-drawer file cabinet, two chairs, a work counter, or table storage shelving.
- A minimum of 50 square feet of window area per unit is recommended. Windows should be located no more than two feet from the floor. Windows should open from the inside for ventilation purposes. A generous glass window area is recommended to overlook the play yard and promote an indoor-outdoor atmosphere. Roofing overhang and installation of blinds or shutters should be provided to combat excessive sunlight.
- Careful consideration should be given to the locating of kindergarten units in new structures. Each classroom should have a door opening onto the playground or other attractive outdoor space. A six foot roof overhang makes the outdoor area usable on a rainy day as an outdoor learning center.
- One bathroom/shower combination is recommended for every eight kindergarten units.

Outside Play Area

- It is recommended that the outdoor play area be a minimum of 4,300 square feet for two kindergartens. For each additional kindergarten, another 1,400 square feet is recommend. If the playground is shared with the elementary grades, this recommendation may be adjusted accordingly.
- A covered area should be located on the playground to allow children refuge from hot sun and to serve as a play area during inclement weather. It is recommended that this area be 225 to 300 square feet for each kindergarten unit, with a sloped concrete surface to shed water.

Staff

- It is recommended that the kindergarten coordinator have a minimum of one year's experience as a kindergarten teacher and/or supervisor or a minimum of three semester hours of kindergarten practicum experience in addition to the AA license in N-1, K-3 or K-8. It is also suggested that the person hold a Class AA Supervision license. The coordinator may be responsible for, but not restricted to, the following duties: coordinate the kindergarten program within the district, provide inservice to kindergarten teachers and/or teacher assistants, conduct parent sessions, direct the development of an instructional plan for the district, serve as a liaison person for the district with Mississippi Department of Education in Early Childhood, coordinate the assistant teacher program, conduct inservice training for assistant teachers and teachers, and direct the evaluation of both programs.
- It is strongly recommended that teachers employed to teach kindergarten have at least one year of

teaching experience in a kindergarten or kindergarten practicum experience in addition to their teaching certificate.

- The employment of an assistant teacher to assist the certified kindergarten teacher is recommended. For employment the person must qualify under the existing assistant teacher regulations. School districts are directed to pay the assistant teacher according to the district pay scale.

- To enhance pre-reading instruction, to provide more individualized instruction, to promote more time on task since classroom disruptions will be minimized, it is recommended that the teacher-pupil ratio shall not exceed an enrollment of 16 per teacher. If an assistant teacher is assigned to the kindergarten classroom the teacher-pupil ratio shall not exceed an enrollment of 22 per teacher/assistant teacher team. The presence of the reading assistant teacher is critical in promoting the time spent in direct instruction.

Educational Materials

- In purchasing materials, it is suggested that expensive items be obtained with the intent of joint utilization by kindergarten teachers.

- It is recommended that the initial expenditure for any new classroom for equipment, furniture, instructional materials, and consumable supplies should be increased to a minimum of $5,000 per classroom, due to increased cost of these items since the original Kindergarten Guidelines were adopted in 1984.

- It is recommended that each year the district spend a minimum of $500 per classroom on instructional materials and consumable supplies in addition to the Educational Enhancement Funds (EEF). This is needed to replenish instructional materials that have been lost or damaged through years of use.

Parent Participation

- In the Parents' Handbook, the district may utilize the information disseminated by the Mississippi Department of Education to explain the kindergarten program to parents and/or interested citizens. Attention should be directed to program goals, philosophy, program implementation of those goals, and the role of the parent in the learning process of the child. The purpose of the communication, which may be included in an existing school handbook, is to include the parent as a part of the instructional process.

- It is recommended that school districts implement a volunteer parent program to assist in classroom instruction at the request of the classroom teacher. Inservice sessions must be provided by the district to parent volunteers prior to working in the classroom.

Transportation

- School Bus Safety: It is recommended that a safety monitor be appointed on each school bus to board and de-board the bus. This person could be a high school student that rides the bus or it be an adult paid for this purpose.

Reading Benchmarks for Kindergarten

Attends and responds to print

O - Expresses his wants, needs, and thoughts in his primary language
I - Retells a familiar story using own words
O - Moves hand in space from left to right
O - Understands left to right progression on the page; top to bottom directions
I - Holds a book in correct way
O - Understands return sweep; identifies direction which print is read
O - Recognizes print in the environment
O - Reads some environmental print (signs/labels)
O - Reproduces a pattern using concrete objects

Has sense of story

O - Listens attentively to a story
O - Engages in reading-like activities
O - Joins in reading of familiar books
O - Begins to read predictable/pattern books
O - Dictates a story
O - Identifies words in experience story
O - Understands that print conveys meaning

Exhibits developmentally appropriate oral language for communication purposes

O - Retells a personal story
O - Responds to questions in conversation using words and phrases in the primary language
O - Participates in conversation while interacting with peers
O - Can sequence in proper order
O - Recalls sequence of events
O - Uses positional words
O - Speaks in sentences

Recognizes uppercase and lowercase letters

I - Points to and says letters in the child's name
I - Names printed letters
I - Can match letters

Uses knowledge of letter-sound (grapheme/phoneme) relationships to manipulate sounds in the written word

I - Responds to cue words that begin with the same sound
I - Responds to cue words that end with the same sound
I - Responds to cue words that rhyme
O - Identifies the relationship between letters and sounds
O - Distinguishes sound units/syllables (clapping/stomping/finger tapping)

Demonstrates phonemic awareness

I - Produces rhyming words
I - Recognizes the same phoneme
I - Pronounces the beginning sound in a word
O - Blends sounds in two phonemic words (e.g., *at*—a-t, *me*—m-e)

Constructs meaning when responding to print

O - Interprets a picture orally
O - Produces an imagined story to accompany pictures
O - Predicts an outcome
O - Develops an awareness of cause and effect
O - Makes transfer of knowledge through demonstrated application
O - Begins to differentiate reality from fantasy
O - Understands position words (e.g., in, on, above, below, under, over, beside, front, back, etc.)

Creates a written form using various materials

O - Reproduces a visual pattern
O - Approximates writing using scribble/drawing to communicate an idea
O - Begins to use letters to communicate ideas
O - Traces shapes
O - Draws an enclosed space that is recognizable (e.g., circle, box, etc.)
O - Legibly writes first name from memory

Develops listening skills

O - Follows simple directions
I - Listens to an age-appropriate story

Develops and expands sight vocabulary

O - Reads and recognizes proper names of classmates
O - Reads labeled objects in room
O- Reads and recognizes words representing familiar objects
O - Means teacher should be able to observe naturally throughout the day – possibly use anecdotal records.
I - Informal Assessment – those marked "I" have an assessment task attached.

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